

THE DIAMOND BUTTON

FROM THE DIARY OF A LAWYER AND THE NOTE BOOK OF A REPORTER.

By BARCLAY NORTH.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE REPORTER DISCOVERS A PLAN TO THE LAWYER.

HOLBROOK colored him. "Here, you lunatic, what are you up to?" "I want to stop her. I want to interview her. Stop that elevator." "That you shan't." "Who'll prevent me?" "I will. I am her counsel, and she will not be interviewed against my advice. Come in. If you want to interview anybody, interview me."

Tom looked at him roughly and said: "Do you recollect what the reply of the king was to Richelieu, when the cardinal told him he must love anybody, to love him?"

"No." "He said, 'A very poor substitute, your eminence, for a fresh young demoiselle.' So say I."

Holbrook led the way into his private office, closing the door behind them. "Squat," said he to Tom, "and take a cigar."

Tom threw himself on the lounge at full length and as he lit his cigar, said: "By Jove—puff—puff—it's a deuced—puff—strange thing—puff—puff—puff—that I should—puff—have run up—puff—puff—against Templeton's sister here."

"Why?" "Because it was precisely that murder which led me here. What have you got new about it?"

"Nothing." "And you her counsel?" "Yes, since ten minutes ago."

"Hasn't she got a suspicion of any kind—of a woman, or a quarrel, etc.?" "Not a suspicion. But let me put you on the right track. I am retained to look after the dead brother's property, and see to closing up his business."

"Oh, well, I haven't dropped that murder yet."

"What do you know about it?" "Not much, if anything. The old man has become very much interested in the case, and has discharged me."

"The 'old man' was the editor-in-chief of the paper Tom was employed on."

"Discharged you?" "Yes, at my suggestion."

"I don't understand you."

"No. Well, then, I am detailed to work this matter to the end. As a first move I have gotten myself discharged, so as to throw the other boys off the scent. Do you see?"

"Oh!" "I have been working for three days, and I want help. Those confounded detectives are jealous of me ever since I rooted out that nest of burglars up the country—your remember—and watch me like a hawk."

"How can I help you?" "Very easily, and all the more since you are now counsel for the sister. I want an exact description of that suit of clothes the man wore who knifed Templeton. Of course if I asked to see it I could see enough, but I'd have the whole lot of them on my heels."

"And you want me to get the suit for you?" "No, but I want you to become thoroughly acquainted with it."

"To what end?" "I want to buy a suit just like it."

"Pshaw." "You think I am fooling?" "I don't think it. I know it."

CHAPTER IX.

A DINNER AT DELMONICO'S.

"Come and see me the day after tomorrow, in the morning."

"All right. I'm off."

"Stop a minute. I want to talk now."

"What is it? I'm in a hurry."

"I want to talk of the Templeton murder."

"Drive ahead."

"Have you ever heard of a young lady named Flora Ashgrove?"

"Yes, and have seen her, too."

"Do you know the set she goes with?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the men?"

"All of them."

"Who are they?"

"First there's Henry Holbrook."

"No, he's last, go on."

"Oh, Charlie Gray, Henry Eskine, Fred Rhinehart, Jack Hardy, Elmore Broadst, Steve Ellengwood and that set."

"Can you fall in with them?"

"Easily enough, in one place or another."

"Well, so much on that head. Now, let's talk about the murder."

"My dear boy, if you want to play with me, play an open hand, no half confidences. You can't switch me off in that way."

Holbrook was annoyed.

"Tom, you are too shrewd for me. I can't say any more today on that score. But I want to say this: I am very anxious to get at the bottom of this matter. Half an hour before you came in I had determined to hunt you up. You are already engaged on the affair. I propose to retain you in the matter additionally and give you some assistance. It won't be long either before I can give it to you, but not today. When you come to me day after tomorrow I will play an open hand."

"Good. I'm off."

"No, hold on. What are you going to do to-night?"

"Nothing."

"Dine with me at 8, and afterward let us go to the Casino."

"All right, I'll do that."

"Meet me at 8 sharp at 'Dixie's'."

"Good. Now I am off. Bye-bye."

After Tom left the room, Holbrook went to the window and looked out. The scene before him, however, was not what interested him. His thoughts had gone back again to that singular interview with Flora Ashgrove.

"Why shouldn't I tell Tom of that conversation?" he asked himself aloud. "He is trustworthy and shrewd. It is not like talking to a public official, and he will respect confidence. Suppose the girl is implicated! What then? No obligation rests on me to protect her from her evil deeds, if evil deeds they are. If they are not, and she is not compromised, then no harm is done. Yes, I'll tell him, and to-night."

"I promised myself to keep out of this affair, and here I am going in full length. So much for the influence of a pair of soft brown eyes. By George, she is a beautiful girl, Annie Templeton! A fellow could be very happy in the love of such a creature."

Then he drummed on the window, lost in pleasant castle building.

Suddenly he started with the exclamation: "Dreaming is not work."

He looked at his watch.

"Half-past three; I have two hours and a half before me."

He caught his hat and hurried out.

CHAPTER IX.

A DINNER AT DELMONICO'S.

NCE in the street, he hurried to Maiden Lane and entered the store of a manufacturing jeweler.

A moment later he issued with a companion, and at the corner of Broadway waited for a cab.

One was soon hailed, and the two entered and were driven to police headquarters.

It had not long been there. After a private interview with a high official the partners were brought to him and the diamond button as well.

The high official was present.

The button was shown to his companion, who was the foreman of the manufacturing jeweler.

"I want such a description written of that button as you would give another jeweler," said Holbrook.

The man looked at it curiously.

"That was never made in this country."

CHAPTER X.

A PERFORMANCE NOT DOWN ON THE HILLS.



HE entertainment on the night of the visit of our two friends was comic opera, for which the house is famous. The one occupying the boards was highly popular, and though it was midsummer the house was crowded.

The audience, however, was not furnished by New York.

It was clearly made up of strangers to the city.

Tom made this remark to his companion as soon as they seated themselves.

"Did you ever know," asked Tom, "that I was an actor once?"

"No."

"Fact. A very bad one. I began life that way, but discovered in time that I had not the qualities requisite for success, and so after two seasons of starvation I abandoned the sock and buskin and eventually drifted into journalism. That is my vocation."

He looked at his programme.

"Yes, I thought so," he continued; "you will see on the stage to-night a girl I was once engaged to."

"You cut her when you cut the profession?"

"No, she cut me—for a pair of diamond earrings. I think that fact had quite as much as anything else to do with the realizing sense of my dramatic deficiencies. Ah, but that was in the long ago."

The first act then demanded their attention, and at its close Tom looked about the house.

He directed the attention of Holbrook to one of the boxes.

"Is that not Flora Ashgrove?"

Holbrook leveled his opera glasses at the box pointed out.

"Yes. No doubt of it, though her back is turned to us. Who are the others in the box?"

"Let me have the glasses," said Tom, "I can't make them out. Three men and another woman. They sit in the shadow. Stop, there is some one coming from the box. Oh, it's Dick Witherspoon, her cousin. That's all right, he'll come back; he is going out for a clove."

"Somewhat strange to see 'the handsome Flora' at a theatre at this time of the year," commented Holbrook.

"Yes, one would suppose she was at Newport."

"She has been there, and came in on some business with her uncle. The business must have detained her."

"So it seems."

"She must have been in the city at the time of the funeral."

"Whose?"

"Templeton's."

deprived themselves of comfortable seats during the third act for nothing."

Holbrook, who was in a bad humor, replied:

"I'm sure we did. She won't go up there, she would think it bad form."

"Bah! It's bad form, so her set would say, to be seen at a theatre at this time of year, especially in the city."

"Hush," he continued, "there she goes now," as the brightly lighted elevator glided up. "Come, let us go up. No wait until they have had time to be seated."

"No."

They waited a moment or two, and then ascended the stairs to the roof. At first they did not see the party, but carefully proceeding they came upon them partially hid behind a large fir tree planted in a tub. They came upon them in such a manner that they were plainly observed.

Tom dropped down into a chair at a vacant table a short distance off, saying as he did so, quite loudly: "Here, Holbrook, here is a place."

Then, in a lower tone:

"Holbrook, you must go over and pay your respects, if nothing else. Let us give our order to the waiter first; don't look up yet. The party is a family party; old Witherspoon, his daughter and son, the 'handsome Flora' and an old fellow—probably another relative."

Holbrook nodded, and after having given his order arose and crossed to the party on the other side.

Saluting them, he addressed himself to Flora.

"I am surprised to find you in the city, Miss Ashgrove."

"You find me disgraced," she replied. "Uncle is a tyrant about this business; but we return to-morrow."

Her manner was cold, even repellent, and did not offer encouragement. He was somewhat embarrassed, and would have felt awkward, if Mr. Witherspoon had not asked him to join them in their refreshments.

In declining on the score of having a friend from whom he had parted only to pay his respects to them, he was enabled not only to regain self possession, but to recognize in the gentleman Tom had described as "an old fellow," one of New York's first lawyers.

By no means pleased with Flora's reception of him, he determined to give her a rap before parting from her.

Lowering his tone he said:

"I did not see you at the funeral of your relative."

"Who?" she said, with lazy surprise. "Templeton—your remote relative."

"Oh, did I say he was a remote relative? This was said with a haughtiness not unmixed with contempt, as she languidly fanned herself. She did not deign to explain why she was absent."

Holbrook found himself growing red and angry, when to his surprise he saw Flora straighten up quickly, while an anxious, even frightened, expression swept over her face. She looked intently behind him.

He turned and saw a gentleman fashionably clad. He did not know him.

He turned to Flora. She was gazing at him (Holbrook) fixedly; there was a worried, inquiring expression in her eyes; her color was coming and going and her chest heaving, her mouth slightly open.

Apparently she paid little or no attention to the new comer, who was greeting the others of the group.

Holbrook noticed the change in her demeanor and was surprised, so much so that he said bluntly and awkwardly: "I bid you good night, Miss Ashgrove," and bowing to the others returned to Tom.

"We must learn who he is."

"That is easy; wait for me a minute."

Tom hastily disappeared in the direction of the elevator. Holbrook leaned back, smoked his cigar, and pondered on the situation. Tom joined him in a short time, and said: "Come with me to the elevator."

"They went off together, and then a man stepped up to them."

He was a medium sized, thin man, cheaply clad, with sharp features and small eyes.

"This is my friend Mr. Holbrook. He will point out a man to you. We want to know who he is, his name, residence, habits, business—all that you can find out."

"Very well," said the man.

"Follow Holbrook."

The two entered and seated themselves at a point where they could observe the Witherspoon group without being seen.

They had hardly seated themselves when Flora and the man in whom they were so much interested joined her friends again.

"That is the man," said Holbrook. "The one who has that handsome lady on his arm."

"Miss Ashgrove," said the man.

"Yes, you know her, I see."

"Yes, and the man too."

"Oh, let us go to Mr. Bryan, then."

They went out without being observed. Flora's back was turned to them. They found Tom at the elevator and went down stairs.

"He knows him," said Holbrook to Tom when they were on the pavement.

"Who is he?" asked Tom.

"Mr. Fountain—Harry Fountain."

"What is he?"

"Fashionable young man—member of Union club."

"Where does he live?"

"That I don't know. I've told you all I do know."

"Then find out everything you can about him. I shan't want to see you until you bring me the information."

"It will be a short job."

"So much the better," said Tom. "Good-night."

of money on the floor. As he stooped to pick it up he struck Holbrook in the back.

Convinced as he was that he had been touched purposely, from an impulse he could not restrain he turned.

The old man apologized in most courteous terms. His voice was pleasant, but Holbrook felt that the dark eyes of the old man most keenly and rapidly scrutinized his features.

However, he courteously responded to his apologies and the old man passed on into the street.

"That was done on purpose," said the acquaintance.

"I thought so too," replied Holbrook. The barkeeper, who had overheard this exchange, said:

"He asked me who you were, sir."

"What did you tell him?"

"That I didn't know, which was the truth."

Holbrook went out. The old man stood in the shadow of an adjoining door.

Holbrook leaped into a cab and told the man to drive to the Hoffman house, and then watched from the window to see if he was followed.

The old man remained where Holbrook had last seen him.

"I've spent a dollar and a half for nothing," he said. The probability is that he mistook me for some one else, and discovered his error in the drinking place, so he went on to his own hotel."

When he arrived there he went to the desk for letters and cards that might have been left him; he was told by the clerk that a gentleman had called upon him during the evening, but had refused to tell either his name or leave a card, saying that he was unknown to Mr. Holbrook, and would visit him at his office some time during the following day.

Inquiring what the man looked like, he was given a description which tallied with that of the old man whom he had encountered on Broadway but an hour previously.

To say he was alarmed would be to say what was not true, but there is no question but that it made him uneasy.

He began to doubt the advisability of the campaign upon which he had entered, and into which he had been irresistibly drawn.

Now that he had taken a decisive step in the direction of endeavoring to fasten the responsibility of the murder upon one so near to Flora Ashgrove as the man Fountain evidently was, he began to wish he hadn't gone so far as to excite Tom's suspicions in that direction. It seemed a horrible thing to do.

And so, disgusted with himself and more disturbed than he was willing to admit, he sought his chamber.

[This story was commenced in THE SUNDAY HERALD, November 24. Back numbers can be obtained at this office.]

[TO BE CONTINUED NEXT SUNDAY.]

We want readers to know that croup can be prevented. There is no question about this, as it has been done in thousands of cases, and you may depend upon it that when a child takes the croup, it is wholly owing to the negligence of its parents. True croup never appears without due and timely warning: a few hours, or a day or two before the attack, the child becomes hoarse. This hoarseness is the first indication of croup, and is a sure sign that croup is to follow, unless promptly and properly treated. The free use of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy as directed with each bottle, under the heading, "To prevent croup," will drive croup out of the child's system. For sale by the Z. C. M. I. Drug Department.

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